



**State Representative
Tom Mielke**

418 John L. O'Brien Building
P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600
(360) 786-7950
1-800-562-6000
e-mail: mielke_th@leg.wa.gov

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Dear Friends,

The decisions legislators are making now have long-term implications, and it's important we do this right. We are deciding how to best serve this state, especially the need to develop a long-term solution to reducing traffic congestion and improving the safety of our roads.

We need to improve transportation to improve our quality of life and attract new employers. However, we have a responsibility to address the public's top concern about transportation – the need to manage transportation projects more efficiently. It would be easy to just propose a tax increase and then pat ourselves on the back for a job well done. That's not the way I do business.

We have a responsibility to the taxpayers to find ways to stretch the funds and maximize our investments while not placing the burden of Seattle congestion on the backs of Southwest Washington residents. The accompanying information outlines the current transportation plans and what must be included to ensure they serve all Washington.

If you have any questions on transportation or any other issues, please call me at 1-800-562-6000 or e-mail me at mielke_th@leg.wa.gov

Sincerely,

Tom Mielke

P.S. As of June 1, I have opened my district office at 1131 SE Grace Street in Battle Ground. Our phone number is (360) 576-6054. Please call or stop by!

Toll-free Legislative Hotline: 1-800-562-6000

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P.O. Box 40600
Olympia, WA 98504-0600

Serving citizens in Clark, Cowlitz & Lewis counties

**KEEPING
WASHINGTON
ON THE MOVE**

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***Important
Transportation
Information for
Washington citizens***



**We Must
Build
The Public's
Trust First!**

Keeping Washington On The Move!

THE TRANSPORTATION CRISIS

A new federally funded study by the Texas Transportation Institute ranked the Seattle region as having the third worst traffic congestion in the nation. Among “large” cities (1-3 million), Seattle ranked No. 1.

But traffic congestion problems extend far beyond Seattle and the Puget Sound Region. In fact, there isn't a county, city or town in Washington where quality of life isn't tied directly to transportation. Time we could all spend with our families and friends is wasted as we sit in traffic. And our state's economy – already showing signs of slowing – cannot thrive unless we make it easier, quicker and less expensive to get people and products where they need to go.



Tell me what you think about our transportation crisis

★ Olympia

1-800-562-6000

Traffic Congestion: A Statewide Crisis!

Metro Area	National Gridlock Rank	Worst Traffic by Size
Seattle-Everett	3rd most congested	1st among large cities
Vancouver-Portland	8th most congested	3rd among large cities
Tacoma	22nd most congested	1st among medium cities
Spokane	59th most congested	4th among small cities

Source: Texas Transportation Institute, 2001 Urban Mobility Study

THE DEMOCRAT PLANS: NEW TAX INCREASES

GOV. LOCKE'S TAX PLAN

On May 2, the governor unveiled a 10-year, \$17.2 billion proposal to fund combined state and regional transportation improvement projects. More than \$9 billion would come in the form of statewide tax and fee increases, including:

- 7¢ increase in gas taxes (4¢ in 2002; 3¢ in 2004);
- 2% additional excise tax (sales tax) on new and used automobiles; and
- 50% increase in the gross weight surcharge for commercial (business) trucks.

Authorizing metropolitan regions to seek voter-approved tax and fee increases would generate the remaining \$8 billion for regional transportation improvements. Local tax increases could include:

- Local gas taxes in addition to the statewide increase;
- Increased general sales taxes;
- Tolls on new or improved roads; and
- Increased vehicle fees.

HOUSE DEMOCRATS' \$10+ BILLION TAX PLAN

The House Democrat transportation tax proposal would raise \$10 billion in state funds over the next decade by:

- 8¢ increase in gas taxes (4¢ in 2002; 2¢ in 2003; 2¢ in 2004);
- 2% additional excise tax (sales tax) on new and used automobiles – *and on car parts, accessories and services*;
- 25% increase in the gross weight surcharge for commercial (business) trucks – *while expanding the fees to include motor homes*; and,
- \$30 fee (in addition to the current \$30 license fees) per vehicle, dedicated to local bus service and passenger ferries.

Metropolitan regions would then be authorized to raise additional local taxes in accordance with the governor's plan.

THE HOUSE REPUBLICAN PLAN: EFFICIENCIES FIRST!

Bringing relief to congested roads and highways, improving safety and enhancing mobility throughout Washington, remains a top priority. There is certainly much to be done – both to protect our families and our state's economy. Washington is a world-class state – and we all deserve a world-class transportation system to keep us on the move!

House Republicans believe, however, that until all possible efficiencies and savings have been identified and corrected, it would be unfair, irresponsible and inappropriate to further burden the families, taxpayers or businesses of this state with higher taxes.

The House Republican plan could potentially save \$4 billion or more over 10 years. The package includes:

• STREAMLINE THE PERMITTING PROCESS

I'm excited to say both the House and Senate approved this first piece of the House Republican transportation package. On May 29, Gov. Locke signed it into law. The legislation will facilitate permit streamlining for all projects of statewide significance, establish legislative oversight and a Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee, and include options for local governments to follow suit. Through it, the state can shorten the time it takes to permit transportation projects by up to 50 percent and save the taxpayers up to 20 percent on the cost of some road construction projects.

• COMPETITIVE BIDDING TO PRIVATE SECTOR

A 1998 audit of the Department of Transportation estimated that simply opening up routine highway maintenance work to contract competition could save taxpayers up to 10 percent on engineering, design work and routine projects.

• REFORM PREVAILING WAGE LAWS

Current state laws result in contractors on road construction projects having to pay the highest union wages from the largest city in their geographic area. Estimates indicate local governments, especially in rural areas, could free up hundreds of millions of dollars for additional transportation projects through "prevailing wage" reforms.

• PRIORITIZE CRITICAL EMERGENCY RELIEF PROJECTS

House Republicans believe immediate relief to some of Washington's most congested areas should be addressed without further delay. Traffic congestion is the number one factor threatening quality of life for families in Washington and hindering efforts to jump-start our state's economy.